# EDITORIAL: India Taken Over By Rioters?

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## Summary

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The Narendra Modi government has a problem. Ever since it cut Pakistan's "jugular vein" by revoking the special status of Jammu & Kashmir within the Indian constitution, India has been continuously under attack. The image which has been continually flashed across platforms in the last three years is – India taken over by rioters.

While India has made several positive strides in several spheres despite the pandemic, but what maligns our record are frequent episodes of anarchy – Muslim mobs in Shaheen Bagh protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act, Hindu-Muslim rioting in Delhi, Tabhleegi Jamaat's defiance against the lockdown, Muslim neighbourhoods refusing Covid-testing, Sikh farmers blocking the national highway over farm laws, Sikh mob climbing the Red Fort to hoist the Sikh flag, Muslim fundamentalists rioting over hijab ban in a school, Islamists threatening to kill Nupur Sharma over perceived "blasphemy", etc. The latest on the list is our public property being burnt by anarchists over the new recruitment scheme in Army.

Most of these carefully orchestrated violent mutinies in and around the national capital, received the desired limelight, funding and support, putting substantial pressure on the government. The result – even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi got a massive mandate for his second term in 2019 but he has been unable to push necessary reforms with full force. The CAA has gone into cold storage, the farm laws have been retracted and the government has already made amendments to the Agnipath scheme.

While the opposition since 2014, uses every opportunity to scuttle the government's progressive reforms, it is unfair to pin the blame on the old power clique always. Prime Minister Modi himself, his bureaucracy and the Sangh Parivar, which is his party's socio-political backbone, need to review why they have faltered repeatedly in the last three years.

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After each crisis, the government and its propaganda channels cover-up and whitewash the failures. But there is no escaping the fact that today even those who adulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi, are wondering why his government seems to be crumbling under its own weight and losing the grip of the ground.

The executive – advisors, civil servants and intelligence chiefs are supposed to do their due diligence in formulating the policy objectives, implementation and implications. Yet, almost on every critical central government initiative including the domicile laws in Jammu & Kashmir, the executive has shown a lack of thoroughness and rigorous approach. Common people can point out errors and fallacies in policy drafts, government notifications and legislation but the 'babudom' seems to be completely blasé about it.

Home Minister Amit Shah who is responsible for internal security, strikes the right chord in his public statements but somehow is unable to translate them into action. In all anarchic incidents across the country, the intelligence has shown abysmal performance. It seems to gather intel only after massive eruptions on the streets. But what's astonishing is that the Prime Minister has not held anyone accountable even after persistent lapses and frequent flip-flops by his bureaucracy.

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Within the BJP, those who still advocate the idea of communal polarization consolidating its core base, need to recognize that this route has run its course. It was proven in the Delhi elections. Ordinary Indians are used to the democratic culture and therefore, are more inclined towards debate and dialogue. The younger generations don't mind pushing the envelope by talking about the most controversial issues openly. But to assume that they will appreciate rioting on the streets is an unrealistic leap of faith. Common people in India are today questioning the inability of the state to prevent violence and control arson, loot and plunder of public property.

The Sangh Parivar, generally out there to take credit for nurturing a value-based Hindu society in India, has not bothered to understand or explain why they have no influence over the anarchic youth across the country. If the RSS believes that ordinary Hindus in India will keep lapping up the notion ad nauseam that they control the ground, they are mistaken. Common Hindus will ask for proof. Alternatively, Hindus might also wonder if the violent fringe belongs to the Sangh.

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Also, the Sangh needs to have clarity of thought on the Hindu-Muslim question. It can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. One section within the Sangh is aggressively hostile to Muslims whereas the other section wants to imitate the Congress and goes out of its way to appease the conservative elements within the Muslim society. In the process, it creates no space for nationalistic and progressive Muslims in the country. Consequently, the Hindu-Muslim polarization overshadows almost all legitimate debates and corners even the government at the centre. This has resulted in major challenges at both the national and international levels.

The RSS and the BJP government headed by Prime Minister Modi need to sit and talk about the direction in which India is headed towards.

## Aarti Tikoo

With over two decades of work experience in the biggest media groups of India, she is one among India’s most credible and fearless journalists. She has reported and written extensively on Kashmir, Pakistan’s cross-border terrorism, geopolitics and international relations. As a founder of The New Indian, she has now the distinction of being the first woman entrepreneur in Indian national digital media, from Jammu & Kashmir.